Half-way Achievement With “DMPK Globalization Committee”; What Had Been and What Is to Be Done for Further Globalization

Full text of this paper is available at http://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/dmpk

This is the second in series of Editorial of the Journal, following the first addressed by Prof. Kan Chiba, Editor in Chief for Drug Metabolism and Pharmacokinetics (DMPK), who reviewed in the article [vol. 21 (3): 171–172 (2006)] the latest trend and perceived direction of our scientific society, Japanese Society for the Study of Xenobiotics (JSSX), with particular stress on the need to leverage globalization of its official journal. Not limited in the Presidential Inauguration Remark (http://www.jssx.org/eg/index-eg.html) by Prof. Yuichi Sugiyama, President for JSSX since 2006, it is all society members’ goal to evolve the Journal in the global scope and attain its world-wide recognition. A committee was formed to brainstorm what should be practically done for achieving the goal, and to propose a streamlined strategy to the JSSX Director Board.

The committee initially questioned how the Journal be internationally characterized, i.e., what may specifically attract scientists/subscribers in the world? Identified key words were two backbone missions of JSSX; namely, 1) to promote drug discovery and development process, and 2) to serve for appropriate use of drugs in clinics, both of which are highly relevant to pharmaceutical industries. In fact, majority of JSSX members are scientists engaged in drug discovery and/or development, and it is likely the case also in the other international societies. General interests to these directions have increasingly been highlighted along with FDA’s recommendation known as “Critical Path Initiative” announced in 2004. On the other hand, further argued in the committee as for DMPK’s uniqueness was scientific strength of Japanese society. It seems to be a globally perceived fact that scientists in Japan had contributed largely to progress of drug metabolism science in 1980s, in CYP and non-CYP enzymes. Moreover, it should be even evident that outstanding publications from Japanese scientists since early 1990s had rapidly advanced transporter science to the current recognition of its importance in the world. Taking all these elements into consideration, the committee proposed JSSX Directors Board to focus on the following five technology areas to make DMPK uniquely characterized among other international journals in this field:

* Metabolism and Membrane Transport
* In Silico Modeling and In Vitro-to-In Vivo Extrapolation
* Genomics and Genetics in DMPK
* Early Prediction of Drug Response in Man
* Population PK-PD Modeling

To promote these areas as for DMPK’s strength in global scope, the committee worked as the next action on renewing the editorial board. The major principle in the implementation were to include a significant number of scientists from outside Japan, and to assign young and active leaders with key opinions, rather than “big names” from historical achievement. Entire editorial board of DMPK consists of Editor in Chief, Associate Editors, and Editorial Board (reviewers). This organization, however, should maintain regular DMPK issues, thus, the change was designated first in the review board, foreseeing also a subsequent change in Associate Editors, as well. The committee members investigated publications over the last several years and identified names of young scientists for each of specific areas, from both within and outside Japan. In selecting those from outside Japan, there was a suggestion from JSSX Director Board that those from Asian-Pacific countries are to be invited with higher priorities than elsewhere. This is indeed an additional strategy to characterize DMPK in the international arena, namely, to evolve the Journal to the one representing Asian-Pacific topics and interests. Accordingly, about forty scientists were nominated and invited to the new review board, including approximately one-third of non-Japanese members, which is now called “Editorial Advisory Board (EAB)”. The members’ names are listed in this issue and they are expected to not only review and polish-up the manuscript with Editors, but provide the board with scientific and/or strategic proposal to further evolve the journal, as well as help promote DMPK and encourage submission of original papers in his/her own community. Prof. Chiba currently considers the inclusion of non-Japanese as Associate Editors.

Another action/proposal from the committee to make DMPK more internationally attractive are to change the style of review articles. Since its change in 2002 into an English-language journal, it has kept providing excellent pieces of review articles at each issue, with cutting-edge scientific progress in mostly drug metabolism and membrane transports. However,
those articles came out as rather “stand-alone” paper, having not always good link to the rest of original papers in the same issue. The proposed style is to highlight the good contribution by introducing some “Theme Issue” essence, making streamlined lay-out with other original papers wherever possible. This approach requires increasingly high workload of Chief and Associate Editors, probably needing also support by EAB members, as well. The number of such issues (out of annual six issues of DMPK) should naturally be limited to one or two in the initial years. Nevertheless, the concept is fully supported by JSSX Director Board and a continuous effort is to be made for this new attempt.

A follow-up action was done to support some of above proposals and implementations, during the 21st annual congress of JSSX in Tokyo, November 29–December 1, as a survey to the congress participants. Though the number of responses was not quite satisfactory, the overall message from this very first survey were, the five technology areas raised are generally in line with majority’s interests, and not a few scientists have practical ideas, with names of non-Japanese, outstanding scientists abroad who may be inquired to contribute review article in their respective areas. The committee will continue the similar effort and strive for a routine process that may transparently reflect scientists’ view and interests on DMPK.

To conclude this note, several attempts/actions had successfully been launched in order to make DMPK to be an internationally distinguished journal, while some further efforts are obviously demanded. A concern in DMPK Globalization Committee is the relatively low interest toward “modeling & simulation” types of technology area, i.e., in silico modeling, IVIVE and/or Population PKPD modeling, which was implied in the above mentioned survey late last year. Considering again the backbone missions of JSSX (i.e., facilitating drugs’ research/development, and their effective application to clinics), as well as global trend in pharmaceutical science, which is widely discussed along with “Critical Path” initiatives, overall technology that we have to establish is so called “Translational Research” or “Translational Medicine”. Accumulation of scientific knowledges in metabolism, membrane transport, and their genetic regulation (clearly the strength of our society) are indispensable assets, but how to “translate” them into the practical applications need quite often modeling technologies. Nevertheless, looking back the latest DMPK volume in 2006, there were four original papers of population PK modeling and some other papers involving mechanistic or statistic modeling approaches, which is a new trend for the Journal, and seems to reflect current interest and demands in our scientific society. Continuous growth in this technology area is expected in 2007.

The DMPK Globalization Committee will remain brainstorming and keep proposing ideas from wide and balanced point of view for our achieving an internationally attractive journal.

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